A

General Epistle,

GIVEN FORTH

From the Spirit of the Lord, to be Read in his Fear in the Assemblies of the Church of the

FIRST-BORN,

GATHERED

In these *Northern-Countries*, and in all *Countries* and *Islands* where ever the People of the Lord are scattered over the Face of the EARTH.

W. D.

W. Dewsbury

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A General Epiſtle, &c.

Dear Friends,

Called in the Light of the Lord Jeſus to ſtand Living Witneſſes for him upon the Earth amongſt the Children of men: Oh! the Bowels of the Love of the Lord that is in my heart to you, that when I was nigh unto death, to the ſight of all that ſaw me (as to the outward man) and ſcarce able to ſpeak, I was conſtrained to give forth the ſubſtance of what is now ſent amongſt you, for a perfect diſcovery of your conditions; ſeeing that many are called, and few choſen; and many convinced that are not converted; therefore are theſe lines written, that you may truly know whether you be born again, and redeemed from the Earth yea or nay. And in order thereunto, let every man and woman ſearch their hearts with the Light of the Lord, and it will truly manifeſt whether you be born again, and ſo feed upon the Tree of Life; or otherwiſe you reſt in outward formal conformity to the Truth, & the heart in the Earth, & that ſpirit will turn againſt Truth, and hath done: And ſome others are drawn to delight their hearts in the gifts, parts, and knowledge which the Lord hath given them, more then in the Lord, the Fountain from whence they come; and ſo abuſe the gift, and feeds upon the fruit of the Tree of Knowledg, which puffeth up, and maketh man wiſe in his own eyes, and ſay in his heart, I am wiſe, and rich, ſees, and wants nothing; when they are blind, miſerable, naked, and wants all things; and whatever any profeſs, as to the ſervice of God, that is in this condition, they have an end to themſelves in what they do, which grieveth the Spirit of the Lord, when men and women in a diſcourſitive ſpirit takes upon them to declare the Truth, when the Lord neither calls them, nor ſpeaketh by them; ſo are the Children born of the Royal Seed burthened, (for ſuch have turned againſt the Truth, and the Children born of it) whom the Lord hath and will eaſe in the day determined, when all mouthes ſhall be cloſed in ſilence, but who are opened by him; and not any voice be heard, but his own Spirit

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ſpeaking in and thorow his own Children, born of him, who alone ſeeks his glory, and not any thing for themſelves which muſt be denied. Therefore ſeeing the Enemies wiles are great and many; let all dread the Lord, and who have been led aſtray, wait in the heart-ſearching Light, to ſee the Myſtery of Iniquity where it led them forth, and return to the Light to judge down proud exalted ſelf, which hath turned againſt the Truth, and bring into true Poverty, and abhoring of ſelf, to wait at the Throne of Grace, for the Lord to raiſe you up in the reſurrection which raiſed up Jeſus from the dead; and in this life contentious Self is buried in death, and the true unity is known, where the Lord alone is exalted in purity, joy, love and peace in all his; from the leaſt to the higheſt growth, and all Fleſh abaſed before him, who is worthy of all obedience, praiſe and glory for ever, Amen.

And all dear Friends and Brethren that love the Light, and rejoyce in the Judgments of the Lord to have ſubtil Self buried in the true death, that what gifts of the Spirit ſoever the Lord gives unto you, and the Enemy tempt you never ſo ſtrongly to puff you up in a ſelf-priding ſpirit, in what you have received of the Lord; yet his fear is ſo minded by you, which keeps you in a true ſenſe of your nothingneſs, and emptineſs in your ſelves, which cauſes you to wait in true ſelf-denial, for the daily aſſiſtance and renewing of your ſtrength in the reſurrection of Life in the Lord Jeſus; and the more he manifeſts his power with you, the more empty, and nothing you appear in your own eyes: And ſo is the true Birth known which makes Self of no reputation, that the Lord may be exalted in his unlimitted power, in manifeſting himſelf in the poverty, emptineſs, and nothingneſs of his people, who are born of him, that not any Fleſh may glory before him; but all in truth to ſay, The Lord doth all in me, and through me, and the Lord ſhall have the glory; and I will ſit in the duſt at his feet, with all my Brethren and Siſters, to ſerve him, and his people, (through whom we are raiſed up to ſit in the heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus,) in what I may, whilſt I have a being amongſt the Sons of men, to the glory of his Name for ever.

And this is the ſtate of the true Diſciples of Chriſt, that cannot feed of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, although in your journey and travels (you dear Veſſels of the Lord) you ſee the tree of Knowledge

ledge to be good, where it ſtands in its place, but the fruit is not good for to eat, and feed upon, becauſe knowledge puffeth up, but grace maketh humble. Therefore dear Brethren and Siſters born of God, who cannot live in any enjoyment, but as you enjoy the Life and Preſence of God, from whence every good and perfect gift comes.

And dear Lambs, although ſome of you be, in your own eyes, the meaneſt amongſt the People of the Lord; yea, at ſometimes your trials is ſo great, that you are ready to account your ſelves unworthy to be numbred amongſt the People of the Lord, and yet you dare not diſobey him, neither can you live without his preſence.

Oh, you dear Children of God! lift up your heads over all temptations and accuſations of the Enemy, for your groans and cries are entred into the Ears of the Lord God, who in the bowels of his Love and Mercies doth conſtrain me to proclaim the day of the tender compaſſion of the Lord, to all you who are truly poor in your ſpirits; Oh, bleſſed are you among the children of men! for yours is the Kingdom of God. Therefore be not weary of waiting upon the Lord, for in his own time he will turn your ſorrows into joy, and give to you the ſpirit of praiſes, for the ſpirit of heavineſs, as he hath done to many who have endured the like temptations, trials, and ſufferings, under which you wait this day for deliverance, and the Lord will be the ſame to you; therefore be of good comfort, for as the Serpent was lifted up in the Wilderneſs, ſo is the Son of Man lifted up in the Light and Covenant of Life to heal your wounds, and ſave you from ſin, and to give you victory over the Enemy in all his appearances; ſo that you thorow Faith in the Name of Chriſt, make war in righteouſneſs; and fighting the good Fight, in keeping the Faith, you will be made more then Conquerors thorow his Love that he will ſhed abroad in your hearts, which will cauſe you to ſpeak of his goodneſs, and praiſe his Name for all his mercies.

And all dear Children of the Lord, who do witneſs in meaſure that you are truely baptiſed into his Death, and ſo are made partakers of his Reſurrection, as is before written, which is the Life that worſhips him according to his own Will, and ſo is truly accepted of him: therefore watch and pray that you may be guided in the power of his Spirit in all your wayes: And be careful, that not

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any be hasty to utter words before the Lord; neither suffer any sighs or groans, or any thing to be heard to pass thorow you, but as you have the seal of the Spirit of the Lord, that he requires it of you; this I am commanded to lay, as a charge upon you, that so all Flesh may be truly silent before the Lord, and not any voice to be heard, but the living Spirit of the Lord speaking in his people; which you that wait in the fear of the Lord, and minds his leadings, may truly know, as it is written, so doth his Children witness, *He that hath my Word*, saith the Lord, *let him speak my Word faithfully; Is not my Word like a Fire, and a Hammer, that breaks the Rocks in pieces*: Therefore all mind to feel the Word of the Lord speaking in you, that the pure burning Life of the Spirit may be tasted and felt in whatsoever you be exercised in, that so you might be fully assured it is not your own work, as man speaking of God, but the Lord alone uttering his own voice in the forcible power of his own Spirit, in what you are exercised in, whether it be to pray in sighs or groans, or in words, or to speak in exhortation or praises, you are not to quench the Spirit of the Lord in this his day, that he is come and doth appear, in giving divers gifts unto his people, in his spiritual appearance, as he did amongst his Disciples who waited at *Jerusalem*, for the pourings forth of his Spirit from on high; but they that were strangers to the work of the Spirit could not taste the Life that spake in them; but said, *They were mad and full of new wine, &c.* but the Lord justified them, it being the work of his own Spirit; and although he gave unto them various gifts, yet all in the unity of himself, in which they sacrificed, in returning to the Lord his own with advantage, to the glory of his great Name, as his Children doth at this day; blessed be his Name for ever, that forth of the mouthes of Babes his praise is declared, in their measures, as it is with those of higher growth in the Lord; and so do the faithfull Labourers reap the fruit for which they travel, that all the people of the Lord may be filled with his Spirit, and in the exercise and leadings thereof, become a Body of Living Ministers, and a Family of Prophets, the strong leading the weak by the hand, and in tender love building up one another in their most holy Faith, which gives the victory over the World, to reign in the Heavenly Dominion, which causeth the Children of the Most High, in the Authority of the Lord to say to the greatest Persecutors; *Oh man, do what thou*

thou haſt power, the God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us out of thy hand; but if he will not, we are reſolved in his ſtrength to ſuffer what he permitteth man to do; and this is the holy reſolution of all that is born again, and cannot hide your heads in the time of Perſecution, becauſe you are born of the Royal Seed, and have overcome the beggerly, cowardly, earthly ſpirit, thorow the blood of the Lamb, and the word of your teſtimony, and no more to love your lives to death.

And all dear choſen Veſſels of the Lord, ſeeing he hath manifeſted his grace ſo largly to you; with all diligence be obedient in walking anſwerably to his Love and Mercy received, that as Living Witneſſes for God you may ſhine forth in the beauty of Holineſs in all your wayes; and be carefull in keeping your meetings at the time appointed, every one endeavouring to be the firſt at the Meeting, that ſo not any give way to a careleſs ſpirit, as ſome have done, and ſo come to Meetings when others hath been a conſiderable time together, and ſo becomes a burden to the diligent and obedient Servants of the Lord; and ſo the Meetings are not ſo profitable to your comfort, as when you meet diligently at the time; waiting in the fear of the Lord to feel his ſweet preſence, which will keep you awake in the Life of his own Spirit, to the glory of his Name, and the comfort of one another, which will cauſe you to prize the opportunities God gives to you, not knowing how ſoon you may be deprived of them, *&c.*

And be tender one over another, and watch over one another with a pure ſingle eye; and every one ſee the Beam caſt out of your own eye, before you go to ſpy a Mote in others: and if any Brother or Siſter offend, you that know, ſpeak to them privately, in all tenderneſs, to reſtore them; and this know, *Whoever turns a ſinner from the error of his ways, ſaves a ſoul from death, and hides a multitude of ſins*: but if they will not hear, take two or three more, and ſpeak to them again, in the ſpirit of meekneſs, waiting and ſeeking the Lord for their recovery; but if they will not hear, but perſiſt in wickedneſs, then acquaint the Church, whom the Lord in his Wiſdom will order to deal with them for his own glory.

And in all things you do, I dearly beſeech you, do unto others as you would be done unto your ſelves, that ſo you may all, in your meaſures, ſtand as ſaviours upon *Mount-Sion*, to the glory of the Lord, in the power of his own Spirit, which will cauſe the Whiſperer,

rer, Backbiter, Falſe-accuſer, and Tale-bearer to be clenſed away, and caſt out of the Houſe of the Lord; that ſo, in the good order of the holy Spirit of our God, we may all live, that he alone in his Dominion may reign in us, and amongſt us, whoſe Government is upon his ſhoulders, and all the Crowns of the glory of man caſt down at his Feet, that he may be exalted in ordering every member of the Body in their place and ſervice, to his everlaſting praiſe and glory: Even ſo, dear Father, carry on thy work in all the Churches of the Saints, ſcattered over the face of the Earth, that in the Eternal unity they may be eſtabliſhed in the Lord, being one, and his Name one, and all the contrary ſwept away with the Breath of thy Mouth, and brightneſs of thy coming; So come Lord Jeſus, take to thee thy great Power, and reign in thy Authority in and amongſt thy dear Children to the aſtoniſhment of the Nations, and all people that are not born again, and to the Exaltation of thy own Name and Kingdom over all, who is worthy to reign, bleſſed for ever, and of whoſe Dominion there is no end.

And all you faithfull Labourers in the Goſpel of Chriſt, who in true innocency travel in his Strength, and ſeeks not any thing for your ſelves in what you do, but to glorifie the Lord in eſtabliſhing his people in the Living unity, in his own Spirit: Oh, bleſſed are you amongſt the people! my ſoul praiſes the Lord for you, and bleſſeth his Name that ever he raiſed up ſuch a ſpirit in you, that in all the greateſt riches of the gifts of the Spirit God gives to you, yet you remain truly poor in your ſelves, and in deep humilty become Servants to his People for the Lords ſake; and being poor you make many rich in that which will abide freſh and green in the Winter Storms, and will not fade away in the Terrible Blaſts which will come for the trial of his People, and cauſe all hearts to fail, but what is born of his own nature. Oh, dearly beloved Brethren, feel my Bowels of enlarged love, which floweth to you in the Love and Life received and enjoyed thorow death, where there is no variableneſs nor ſhaddow of change.

I remain your Brother, in the Word of his Patience, to endure the Sufferings, according to his determination, with all that love the Lord better then their lives,

Warwick, the 14th of the 10th Moneth, 68.

William Dewsbury.